



PRESS RELEASE

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

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CALIFORNIA DELEGATION HEADS TO NATION'S CAPITOL FOR WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON AGING

S. KIMBERLY BELSHÉ
SECRETARY

SACRAMENTO – More than 120 California residents will travel to Washington, D.C., on December 11-14 to attend the 2005 White House Conference on Aging (WHCoA), which is held every 10 years to help develop recommendations for the President and Congress on national aging policies. The first WHCoA was held in 1961.

The WHCoA will provide a nationwide forum for delegates to prioritize policy issues and recommend implementation strategies for programs and services that best meet the needs of seniors. Specific outcomes of this conference will help drive policy issues in California going forward.

"In California, the elderly population is expected to grow more than twice as fast as the total population. In fact, the elderly will increase by 112 percent from 1990 to 2020," said Kim Belshé, secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency. "These statistics underscore the importance of focusing on national and state efforts to meet the current and future needs of our seniors."

The California delegation, which is the largest state delegation to attend the conference, was appointed by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, members of Congress, the National Congress of American Indians and the WHCoA Policy Committee. Delegates represent the diversity of California and include a wide group of varied interests and professions, such as aging and health professionals, baby boomers, business and industry, disability, non-profit and veterans.

Among the California delegates are Health and Human Services Agency Assistant Secretary Sarah Steenhausen, who will represent Secretary Belshé at the conference. Ms. Steenhausen, a native of Marin County, is a policy expert on aging issues and leads the Agency's efforts to implement the Olmstead plan. Also, the Governor appointed as a delegate former California Health and Welfare Agency Secretary Sandra R. Smoley, who currently heads up The Sandy Smoley Group, a health care and local and state government consulting firm.

Throughout his Administration, the Governor has protected the rights of older Californians and worked to develop new programs and strengthen existing ones to provide needed services to California's aged population. Among his efforts, the Governor:

- Established an Olmstead Advisory Committee to provide counsel on appropriate policies and programs that will ensure older Californians and persons with disabilities have access to and choices of community-based services and placement options.
- Secured a federal Medicaid waiver that allows thousands of In-Home Supportive Services recipients (elderly and persons with disabilities) to receive services in their homes and avoid unnecessary institutionalization.

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- Awarded an \$800,000 federal grant to develop and test the effectiveness of local “one-stop” centers for benefits counseling, health promotion activities and information on home and community support options for the elderly and persons with disabilities.
- Signed legislation to help protect seniors and dependent adults from financial abuse.

The theme of the 2005 WHCoA is “The Booming Dynamics of Aging – From Awareness to Action,” which reflects the unique mandate of the conference to focus on the aging population of today and tomorrow, including 78 million baby boomers who will begin turning 60 in January 2006. For more information, log on to <http://www.whcoa.gov>.

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